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LETTER DATED 23 FEBRUARY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF
THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, issued today, 23 February 1999, entitled "Appeasing the Aggressor Must End" (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Duri MOHAMMED
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex

Statement by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia issued
on 23 February 1999 in Addis Ababa entitled "Appeasing the
Aggressor Must End"

No one, if honest, can question Ethiopia's commitment to the peaceful resolution of the conflict imposed on our people by Eritrea through the aggression carried out first in May last year, culminating in the latest offensive it mounted on 6 February 1999. In between, there was little Ethiopia left undone to avert war and to seek a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

The road to peace has been and is being blocked by Eritrea. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) Framework Agreement provides the key to peace and the answer for avoiding the escalation of the conflict, which Ethiopia has done so much to avoid over the past eight months.

The OAU Framework Agreement was not drafted by Ethiopia just as the peace proposals made earlier by the United States of America and Rwanda were not. The OAU peace proposal, which in the Security Council's judgement is the "best hope" for peace and is "fair and balanced", has in effect been rejected by Eritrea. What is Ethiopia expected to do under these circumstances? What would other self-respecting nations have done under similar circumstances? All the more so when those who have consistently refused to accept peace proposals decided to raise the ante by launching another major offensive, as Eritrea did on 6 February 1999 after having violated the air moratorium the previous day.

It is in the light of this that the statement issued on 22 February 1999 by the spokesman of the United States State Department sounds very strange indeed and out of step with the reality. It is not only air strikes that would be unnecessary, but all fighting would be made unnecessary if Eritrea were to commit itself to peace and to withdrawal from Ethiopian territory. This is the truth and these are the facts.

The talk about an air moratorium at a time when a full-scale war is raging and when, because of Eritrean aggression and intransigence, two armies are throwing at each other whatever legitimate weapons they have is amazingly naive and amounts to showing a lack of seriousness about the magnitude of the crime committed by the Eritrean authorities. While the just demand would have been even at this late hour a call on Eritrea to undo its aggression and to assist Ethiopia to achieve peace, the spokesman of the State Department chose to talk about an air moratorium and to insinuate about air strikes by Ethiopia against economic targets and population centres. This is as false as it is unjustified.

Ethiopia is exercising its right of self-defence. When it does this, it is with scrupulous observance of principles of humanitarian laws and the Geneva Conventions.

Ethiopia, unlike Eritrea, has never made civilians targets, either in its air strikes or in its ground counter-offensive. The track record of Eritrea in this respect is pretty much known to the United States State Department, and

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there is no need for it to be reiterated. What needs to be reiterated is that Ethiopia is facing an enemy that has no moral scruples and that has proved capable of deliberately staging air strikes against schools, as Eritrea so shamelessly did in June of last year. If those who failed to respond to that atrocity in the proper manner could not feel remorse, they should at least now tell the truth, and the truth is what is stated in the foregoing. This is not an Ethiopian version of the truth. It is the truth, plain and simple, accepted by all those involved in the attempt to broker peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea, most of all by OAU, whose proposals for peace are still on the table, rudely rejected by Eritrea while Ethiopia still awaits their implementation, having accepted them a long time ago. The spokesman of the State Department probably felt this was not important and therefore not worth mentioning. For Ethiopia, this is the crux of the matter.
